United Nations

Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean

General Assembly

Official Records • Fifty-first Session
Supplement No. 29 (A/51/29)

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NOTE

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. By its resolution 50/76 of 12 December 1995, the General Assembly, after taking note of the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean, 1/ requested the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee to pursue his dialogue on the work of the Committee with the permanent members of the Security Council and major maritime users of the Indian Ocean and to apprise the Ad Hoc Committee of his consultations and other relevant developments at a meeting to be held in 1996 for that specific purpose, to take place before the 1997 regular session of the Committee. The Assembly also requested the Ad Hoc Committee to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session a report on the consultations held.

2. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/76, the Ad Hoc Committee held its session on 8 July 1996 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The Committee held one formal meeting during 1996.

3. The following delegations made statements in the general discussion under agenda item 4: Mozambique, Pakistan and India.

4. The Ad Hoc Committee is composed of the following States:

(a) 44 members:

Australia
Bangladesh
Bulgaria
Canada
China
Djibouti
Egypt
Ethiopia
Germany
Greece
India
Indonesia
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Iraq
Italy
Japan
Kenya
Liberia
Madagascar
Malaysia
Maldives
Mauritius
Mozambique
Netherlands
Norway
Oman
Pakistan
Panama
Poland
Romania
Russian Federation
Seychelles
Singapore
Somalia
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Thailand
Uganda
United Arab Emirates
United Republic of Tanzania
Yemen
Yugoslavia
Zambia
Zimbabwe

(b) Observers: Nepal, South Africa, Sweden.

5. The elected officers of the Ad Hoc Committee were the following:

Chairman: Mr. Herman Leonard de Silva (Sri Lanka)

Vice-Chairmen: Ms. Genevieve Hamilton (Australia)
Mr. Carlos dos Santos (Mozambique)
Mr. Sudjadnan Parnohadiningrat (Indonesia)

Rapporteur: Ms. Jocelyne Lingaya (Madagascar)

II. WORK OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE IN 1996

A. Agenda of the Ad Hoc Committee

6. At its 443rd meeting, the Ad Hoc Committee adopted the following agenda (A/AC.159/L.124):

1. Opening of the session.

2. Adoption of the agenda.

3. Election of Vice-Chairmen.

4. Implementation of the General Assembly resolution 50/76 of 12 December 1995:

   - Briefing by the Chairman on his consultations.

5. Other matters.

6. Report of the Ad Hoc Committee to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session.

B. Implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/76

7. During the meeting on 8 July (443rd meeting), the Ad Hoc Committee considered General Assembly resolution 50/76 and its implementation.

8. The Chairman of the Committee informed the members of his consultations with the representatives of France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. In this connection, he made the following statement:

> "The 1996 session of the Ad Hoc Committee is confined to one meeting. We have been asked by the General Assembly to hold one meeting for a specific purpose. The General Assembly in its resolution 50/76 requested the Chairman to pursue his dialogue on the work of the Committee with the permanent members of the Security Council and major maritime users of the Indian Ocean. The Assembly also asked the Chairman to apprise the members of the Ad Hoc Committee of his consultations and other relevant developments.
>
> "I consulted with the three permanent members of the Security Council that have withdrawn from the Committee, France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. During my consultations I recalled the meetings I had had last year with the representatives of their respective Governments. I reiterated the context in which the consultations were being conducted, with particular reference to the newly emerging international climate of confidence following the end of the cold war and the reduction of tensions consequent upon the termination of the super-Power rivalry and the other relevant developments in international relations, all of which augured well for peace in the Indian Ocean area. I repeated that they presented opportunities for new alternative approaches for regional and global cooperation in the Indian Ocean.

"I informed them that in considering these new alternative approaches, the Ad Hoc Committee has reiterated its view that as permanent members of the Security Council their renewed participation in the work of the Committee was important. I stressed that it would greatly facilitate the development of a mutually beneficial dialogue to advance peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean region.

"The United States authorities informed me that the United States had not agreed from the beginning with the concept of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace, although it had attended the Ad Hoc Committee meetings until 1989. It disagreed with the concept of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace because it felt that the initiative restricted the free movement of its navy in the Indian Ocean. Being a major Power, the United States needed unhindered movement in the oceans of the world to look after its strategic interests. The United States is still not clear as to what the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace is seeking to achieve. The United States authorities also stated that the points made in the 1971 Declaration are irrelevant in the context of present-day developments. In their view the security and other concerns which the countries of the region seek to address are already looked after by other institutions and arrangements. The United States also felt that if the Indian Ocean countries seek to address their concerns, they should do so themselves on a regional basis without involving outside Powers, such as the zone of peace arrangements made in South Atlantic, an initiative of the States concerned. The United States further stated that the Indian Ocean countries themselves have many difficulties and different perceptions on security, disarmament, etc. These will have to be reconciled if the proposal for the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace is to become a viable mechanism for peace. It was also mentioned that an annual expenditure of US$ 150,000 in maintaining the Ad Hoc Committee cannot be justified in the context of demands made on the regular budget of the United Nations for more pressing concerns, such as the refugee and humanitarian issues.

"The authorities of the United Kingdom informed me that they had voted against resolution 50/76 and that from the reports they have received of the 1995 session of the Ad Hoc Committee, they do not believe that the Committee is making any significant progress. They therefore remain convinced that at present there is no reason to change their position on rejoining the Committee.

"The French authorities confirmed the French position on this question as had been conveyed to me in 1995. The position of France remained that suppression of the references to the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace in the resolution of the General Assembly defining the mandate of the Ad Hoc Committee constituted a prerequisite to an eventual return of France to the Ad Hoc Committee. France stated, in view of this, that the evolution of the international context that was described seems to make obsolete the reference to a text whose language is marked by the circumstances of the time of its adoption and to which France has never subscribed. The French authorities also drew attention to the significant contribution of France to peace and security in the Indian Ocean. France stated further that many recent initiatives by France have underscored this dimension of France's policy in the region. In particular, France has signed three additional Protocols to the Treaty of Pelindaba creating a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa. This is an important contribution to peace and security in the western part of the Indian Ocean."

C. Introduction and adoption of the report of the Ad Hoc Committee to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session

9. At its 443rd meeting, on 8 July, the Rapporteur of the Ad Hoc Committee introduced the draft report of the Committee (A/AC.159/L.125).

10. It was recommended that a regular session be held in 1997.

11. In this connection, the Chairman informed the members of the Committee of his intention to hold informal consultations concerning the text of the resolution to be submitted at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

12. At the same meeting, the Ad Hoc Committee considered and adopted its draft report to the General Assembly (A/AC.159/L.125).

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 29 (A/50/29).